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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/910,085	07/20/2001	Kenneth B. Higgins	5113A	2412

7590

04/14/2005

Milliken & Company
P.O. Box 1927
Spartanburg, SC 29304

EXAMINER

JUSKA, CHERYL ANN

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1771

DATE MAILED: 04/14/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/910,085

Applicant(s)

HIGGINS ET AL.

Examiner

Cheryl Juska

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 24 January 2005.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-51,54,55,57-85,89-100,103-106,109-112,114,119,122 and 143 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-51,54,55,57-85,89-100,103-106,109-112,114,119,122 and 143 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 02/05.
- 4) ☒ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 04/05.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection on January 24, 2005. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114.

Response to Amendment

2. Applicant's amendment filed January 24, 2005, with the RCE papers, has been entered. Claims 2, 52, 53, 56, 86-88, 101, 102, 107, 108, 113, 115-118, 120, 121, and 123-142 have been cancelled, while claims 1, 3, 36-39, and 109 have been amended. New claim 143 has been added. Thus, the pending claims are 1, 3-51, 54, 55, 57-85, 89-100, 103-106, 109-112, 114, 119, 122, and 143.

3. The Letter filed September 23, 2004, discussing the substance of the September 15th interview and the Supplemental Kilpatrick Declaration filed January 24, 2005, have also been entered.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

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5. Claims 1, 3, 4, 7-17, 19-42, 44-50, 51, 54, 55, 57-60, 62-67, 69-73, 75-85, 89-100, 103-106, 109-112, 114, 119, and 122 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over US 4,522,857 issued to HIGGINS in view of 5,610,207 issued to DE SIMONE et al. as set forth in previous Office Actions and in further view of US 5,540,968 issued to HIGGINS.

Applicant has amended the claims to limit the adhesive material to being at least one layer of adhesive material. Said amendment is insufficient to overcome the standing rejection since the cited prior art teaches "at least one layer of adhesive material."

Applicant has also traversed the rejection of Higgins '857 in view of de Simone by asserting that the cited prior art does not teach the claim limitation wherein a layer of adhesive is in contacting bonding relation with the upper side of the rebond foam layer (Amendment, page 21, 4th paragraph). In view of this argument, the art rejection has been amended to include Higgins '968.

Higgins '857 exemplifies a carrier layer between the adhesive layer and the foam backing layer. However, it is well known in the art that said carrier layer can be omitted so that the adhesive layer is in contacting bonding relation to the foam backing. For example, Higgins '968 teaches a similar carpet structure wherein a reinforcement layer (i.e., carrier layer) is between the adhesive layer and the foam layer (Figure 3A and col. 6, lines 8-12). Higgins '968 also teaches an equivalent structure wherein said reinforcement layer is omitted and said adhesive layer directly contacts the foam layer (col. 6, lines 44-54 and Figure 4A). Thus, it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to omit the carrier layer of Higgins '857, as is taught by Higgins '968, when bonding the rebond foam layer of de Simone to the Higgins '857 carpet tile. Motivation

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to do so would be to eliminate a process step and the required apparatus unnecessary and to eliminate a layer, wherein the overall thickness of the carpet tile is reduced. Therefore, claims 1, 3, 4, 7-17, 19-42, 44-50, 51, 54, 55, 57-60, 62-67, 69-73, 75-85, 89-100, 103-106, 109-112, 114, 119, and 122 are rejected as being obvious over the cited prior art.

6. Claims 5, 6, 18, and 43 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over both of the cited HIGGINS patents and the DE SIMONE patent as set forth above, and in further view of EP 048 986 issued to DOW for the reasons of record.

7. Claims 61, 68, and 74 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over both of the cited HIGGINS patents and the DE SIMONE patent as set forth above, and in further view of US 5,616,200 issued to HAMILTON for the reasons of record.

8. New claim 143 is rejected 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over both of the cited HIGGINS patents in view of the DE SIMONE patent as applied to claim 1 above.

Claim 143 limits the carpet tile of claim 1 to having a second layer of adhesive material between the primary carpet and the rebond foam cushion. Since Higgins '857 teaches two layers of adhesive between the primary carpet and the foam cushion layer (reference number 16 in Figures 1 and 2), claim 143 is rejected over both of the cited Higgins patents in view of de Simone for the reasons of record.

Response to Arguments

9. Applicant's arguments and the Kilpatrick Declaration have been considered in full, but have not been found to be persuasive. While said arguments and declaration

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establish the accepted wisdom in the art that rebond foam would not be suited for carpet tiles due to the lack of uniformity in thickness and density which produces a reduced strength and durability, the assertion of unexpected results has not been clearly established. Specifically, the declaration states, "It was surprising and unexpected that rebond foam would work as well as virgin polyurethane foam in a carpet tile."

(Declaration, page 2, section 21). However, said declaration does not quantitatively describe said unexpected results. [Note this is not equivalent to stating the declaration is merely an opinion not supported by fact.] Additionally, while applicant argues carpet tiles having the same construction as the Milliken Comfort Plus[®] cushion back carpet tiles with the exception of the rebond foam layer were found to have similar performance characteristics, said arguments do not quantitatively describe the unexpected results. In other words, applicant has not clearly established the two carpet tiles having identical constructions other than the foam cushion backing (i.e., rebond vs. virgin polyurethane) have similar performance characteristics. It is well settled that unexpected results must be established by factual evidence. "Mere argument or conclusory statements in the specification does not suffice." *In re De Blauwe*, 222 USPQ 191. It is this equivalent performance that is unexpected in view of the accepted wisdom in the art that rebond foam is inferior to virgin foam in strength, durability, uniformity, etc.

10. As previously suggested—although, perhaps not clearly—in the follow-up telephonic interview on about September 20, 2004, it is recommended that applicant submit a signed declaration describing in detail the construction of each carpet tile (e.g., face yarn composition and denier, face weight, thickness, and density, primary backing construction and weight, pre-coat layer composition and weight, hot melt composition

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and weight, reinforcement layer construction and weight, foam cushion back composition, weight, thickness, and density, and backing layer construction and weight). Said declaration should also include the results of performance tests that reflect the cushion layer of the carpet tile (e.g., cushion resilience, Herzog walking comfort rating, castor chair test, Gmax, etc.). It is noted that the scope of said declaration would establish the scope of allowable subject matter. For example, if the two carpet tiles are equivalent in all aspects except the foam composition (i.e., thickness and density of foam are alike), then the allowable subject matter would be a carpet tile having a rebond foam backing. However, say the two carpet tiles differ with respect to the foam layer composition and average foam density, then the scope of the allowable subject matter would be a carpet tile having the rebond foam layer and a specified foam density.

Conclusion

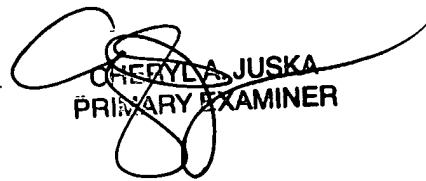
11. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Cheryl Juska whose telephone number is 571-272-1477. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 10am-6pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Terrel Morris can be reached at 571-272-1478. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

12. Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For

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more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


CHERYL A. JUSKA
PRIMARY EXAMINER

cj
April 12, 2005